

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 114559
ORIGIN IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /015 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:IO/UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY:IO/UNA:JFTEFFT

-----023968 050638Z /17

R 050041Z MAY 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 6110

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 114559

FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 2527 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
AMMAN BEIRUT CAIRO JERUSALEM JIDDA MOSCOW KHARTOUM TEL AVIV
MAY 03.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2527

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PEPR, SY, EG

SUBJECT: SYRIA REJECTS RECONCILIATION WITH SADAT--FOR NOW

1. SUMMARY: NUMEIRI IS COMING TO DAMASCUS MAY 4 ON AN
IMPOSSIBLE TASK TO RECONCILE ASSAD AND SADAT, AND THE SYRIANS
HAVE LET HIM KNOW THIS. ASSAD HAS APPARENTLY MOVED FROM
CONTEMPLATING AN OPENING TO SADAT TO FIRM REJECTION OF ANY-
THING LESS THAN TOTAL CAPITULATION, AT LEAST FOR NOW. SADAT
AND THE PEACE PROCESS ARE IN TROUBLE AND SYRIA HAS LITTLE IN-
CENTIVE TO IDENTIFY WITH THEM UNDER THESE PERILOUS CONDITIONS.
INSTEAD, ASSAD SEEMS TO BE LOOKING TO THE LONG TERM IN FORMING
HIS POLICIES AND MAY NOT EXPECT TANGIBLE RETURNS UNTIL
AFTER THE NEXT US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION END SUMMARY.

2. NUMEIRI DIS DUE IN DAMASCUS THURSDAY, MAY 4, TO PURSUE
HIS EFFORTS TO RECONCILE SADAT AND ASSAD. HIS CHANCES FOR
MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD RECONCILIATION RIGHT NOW ARE NIL.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 114559

NUMEIRI HAD PLANNED HIS STOP IN DAMASCUS A WEEK EARLIER BUT,
ACCORDING TO ONE OF OUR SOURCES, DELAYED HIS ARRIVAL AFTER
PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD SENT HIM A MESSAGE WELCOMING HIM AS A
BROTHER ARAB LEADER BUT QUESTIONING THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT.
ASSAD, REPORTEDLY SAID HE DID NOT WANT NUMEIRI TO LOSE FACE
BY COMING TO DAMASCUS WITH FALSE HOPES. SYRIA WOULD NOT
EVEN DISCUSS RECONCILIATION WITH SADAT UNTIL HE FORSWEARS

ALL BILATERAL DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL.

3. THE SYRIAN PRESS HAS BEEN DRUMMING OUT THE SAME MESSAGE DAILY IN A WELTER OF EDITORIALS ATTACKING SADAT AND REFUSING RECONCILIATION. KHADDAM'S INTERPRETER, ABU FARES, TOLD POLOFF THAT THE MAY 2 EDITORIALS IN SYRIA'S PRESS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AN OPEN LETTER TO NUMEIRI (DAMASCUS 2512). IN ADDITION, INFORMATION MINISTER ISKANDAR AHMAD HAS LEFT NO DOUBT WITH SEVERAL JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE INTERVIEWED HIM LATELY THAT THE HARD LINE TOWARD SADAT PREVAILS TODAY IN SYRIA. BEFORE THE ISRAELI RAID INTO LEBANON THIS WAS NOT SO CLEAR. ACCORDING TO BUSINESSMAN GHASSAN DROUBI, FONMIN KHADDAM, BAATH PARTY DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR, AND INFORMATION MINISTER ISKANDAR AHMAD WERE AT THAT TIME LEADING THE PACK IN ADVISING THE PRESIDENT TO MAINTAIN A FIRM STAND. HOWEVER, PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY ADVISOR MUHAMMAD AL-KHOULI, THE PRESIDENT'S BROTHER RIF'AT, AND THEN AIR FORCE COMMANDER NAJI JAMIL WERE URGING THE PRESIDENT TO OPEN THE DOOR A CRACK TO SADAT AND THEY WERE HAVING SOME SUCCESS, NOW IT APPEARS THAT THE ISRAELI INVASION WITH ITS ATTENDANT SYRIAN EMBARRASSMENT BEFORE HER STEADFAST PARTNERS, NAJI JAMIL'S FALL FROM GRACE (FOR TOTALLY UNRELATED REASONS), AND SADAT'S MOUNTING PROBLEMS HAVE TIPPED THE BALANCE TOWARD THE HARDLINERS.

4. KHADDAM'S INTERPRETER SUMMARIZED SYRIA'S VIEW OF SADAT:
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 114559

A) HE FACES INSURMOUNTABLE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AT HOME FOR WHICH HE HAS NO ANSWERS; B) HE CHOSE THE WRONG ISRAELI LEADER, BEGIN, TO DEAL WITH; C) HE THRUST THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION INTO AN IMPOSSIBLE POLITICAL SITUATION BEFORE IT WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO SUPPORT THE INITIATIVE IN CONGRESS WITH THE RESULT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER CANNOT BUDGE THE ISRAELIS AND MANY NOT EVEN BE ABLE TO DELIVER A FEW PLANES TO DEMONSTRATE TANGIBLE SUPPORT. SADAT HAS ONE PROP LEFT, ABU FARES SAID, SAUDI ARABIA, AND THE US CONGRESS IS ABOUT TO UNDERMINE EVEN THIS SUPPORT. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE, FARES CLAIMED, THAT SYRIA WANTS TO STAY AWAY FROM ANY IDENTIFICATION WITH SADAT'S POLICY. HE FELT THAT SADAT HAS SET BACK THE PEACE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND SAID THAT SYRIA WAS THEREFORE ORIENTING ITS POLICY FOR A LONGER PROCESS WHICH MAY NOT BEAR FRUIT UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

5. SYRIA'S PRESENT POLICY EFFORTS WERE CONSISTENT WITH THIS LONG TERM APPROACH. BUILDING THE ARMY, TRYING TO STABILIZE LEBANON, STRENGTHENING THE BILATERAL TIES WITH THE US, MOVING IN INTERNATIONAL FORA TOWARD LESS RHETORIC AND MORE PRAGMATIC COOPERATION; THESE ARE ALL LONG TERM EFFORTS WITH

PAYOFF IN TERMS OF IMAGE AND STRENGTH SEVERAL YEARS OFF. IN
THE MEANTIME, SYRIA IS UNDER NO PRESSURE TO FORCE THE PACE
OF BRINGING EGYPT BACK INTO THE FOLD ALTHOUGH IT DOES NOT
WANT TO CONTINUE THE RIFT INDEFINITELY.
PELLETREAU UNQUOTE
CHRISTOPHER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONCILIATION, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE114559
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IO/UNA:BJSHARP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780191-1045
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780588/aaaacxez.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 22733aa3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2776515
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIA REJECTS RECONCILIATION WITH SADAT--FOR NOW
TAGS: PEPR, OVIP, SY, EG, SU, (NUMAYRI, JAFAR MUHAMMAD), (AL-ASSAD, HAFIZ), (SADAT, ANWAR)
To: USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/22733aa3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014